



Homelessness Australia

*Creating a framework for ending homelessness*

## **We must fix homelessness, not throw up our hands**

### **Plans to walk away from \$6.8 billion National Affordable Housing agreement will “destroy” services, says peak**

Homelessness Australia (HA) says that the Federal Government’s plans to axe the \$6.8 billion National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) will deepen the homelessness crisis, and “destroy” the homelessness service system. The plan, which was delivered via the pages of *The Australian*, came as a shock to the homelessness peak, and agencies.

The NAHA currently delivers \$1.3 billion p.a. funding to public housing and homelessness programs, equivalent to \$6.8 billion over the next 5-year budget period.

As well as funding public housing, the NAHA delivers \$275 million to homelessness agencies to enable them to support women and children, young people and rough sleepers. Last year 279,000 Australians sought assistance from homelessness services – 1 in 85.

“This proposed cut will destroy the homelessness service system at a time when there are more Australians than ever needing help,” said Katherine McKernan, Acting Chair, Homelessness Australia

Combined with recent uncertainty over the \$117 million p.a. National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, HA warns that the NAHA cuts will crush homelessness agencies, slashing their funding at a time when client numbers are soaring.

“We are in the grips of a national housing affordability crisis which is driving homelessness and this is the worst time to be walking away from the problem. This is the time for action and greater investment, not razing the agencies and mechanisms that are dealing with homelessness,” said Ms McKernan.

Currently 312,000 Australians live in public housing, and skyrocketing rents have pushed a further 200,000 onto social housing waiting lists nationally.

“Every day homelessness services must turn away 275 Australians in need because demand is just too great and affordable accommodation just too scarce, and funding cuts will only see more people turned away,” said Ms McKernan

“Slashing the NAHA suggests that the Federal Government has given up on solving homelessness altogether, and doesn’t see the importance of adequate affordable, permanent housing for people on the lowest of incomes,” she said.

“Whilst the Government chips away at the incomes of those on the very lowest rungs, it is simultaneously cutting the vital funding that supports those that most need a safety net,” she said.

“With less public housing available, and homeless programs slashed, services will have no choice but to turn more people away, and we’ll see the results on our streets. The alternatives being mooted by the Federal Government are just re-arranging the deck chairs, and should be introduced in addition to current funding arrangements, not instead of,” she said.

“We urge the government to work with the States to examine the transparency and accountability of the NAHA, and not abandon our most vulnerable citizens when times are tough. We urgently call for an adequately resourced national housing affordability strategy and more investment in social and affordable housing,” said Ms McKernan.

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